

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr I Johnson
Headteacher
Markeaton Primary School
Bromley Street
Derby
DE22 1HL

Dear Mr Johnson

Short inspection of Markeaton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since joining the school in January 2016, you have consistently communicated a clear vision and are committed to continued improvement in order to build on the school's success. You are ambitious for the school and already know the school well. In addition, you are keen to listen to the views of parents, staff and pupils. You have engaged effectively with parents this term through a questionnaire and the vast majority who responded are highly supportive of the school's work. Staff agree that you are injecting a renewed drive and energy into the school and, as a result, staff morale is high. You are building a strong community ethos where together everyone can realise the school's vision to 'grow and learn together'.

Teaching over time is effective at ensuring that pupils make at least good progress and achieve well during their time at Markeaton Primary. Teachers consistently create a positive climate for learning. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and foster good relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves. As a result, pupils are ambitious, enthusiastic and confident learners. Our visits to several classes provided good examples of this. In Year 1, pupils were enthusiastic about sharing adjectives and similes as they enjoyed a

range of exciting activities, including making jam sandwiches. In Years 5 and 6, pupils were captivated by the vivid reading of a Derbyshire folk tale by the class teacher. They were then challenged to identify six key moments in the story to act out in the form of a freeze frame in preparation for a drama presentation of the story.

At the last inspection, inspectors commended the school for providing a happy and caring environment where pupils enjoy learning, make good progress from the start, attend regularly and behave well. The school has maintained these positive aspects. Inspectors also identified the following areas for improvement: developing pupils' writing further by improving their technical skills, including handwriting, and using oral and written feedback to improve basic skills and provide pupils with time to respond to teachers' comments. In addition, inspectors asked the school to provide more opportunities for pupils to interact with others from the different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds that are represented in modern Britain today.

The school has tackled these areas successfully. Attainment in writing has improved. At the end of Key Stage 1, it was significantly higher than national averages in 2014 and 2015. At the end of Key Stage 2, it has been in line with or above national averages since 2012. However, the very strong performance of girls affects this outcome and masks the weaker performance of boys. In 2014, attainment in writing for boys at the end of Year 6 was well below the national average and remained below in 2015. You and your English leader have rightly identified that this is a priority for school improvement. Pupils' writing is marked carefully and pupils are provided with regular opportunities to review teachers' comments. Pupils explained to me how this helps them to correct errors, understand the next steps they need to take towards meeting their targets, and reflect on and consolidate their learning.

You provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to be taught about, and experience at first hand, practices from a range of faiths and cultures different from their own through trips, visits and assemblies. In this way, and through teaching pupils about important core values, such as respect and tolerance, you ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

You and other senior leaders have evaluated the school accurately and have the capacity to make improvements successfully. You are aware of the few areas where more work is needed and are making a good start in tackling these together. You are rightly aspiring to become an outstanding school and are making strides in this direction.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe. Leaders and governors have ensured that current safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of high quality. All staff have undertaken extensive training in all aspects of safeguarding including the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, all adults have a clear understanding of potential risks, and can identify and report early signs. Parents expressed confidence in the school to follow up any concerns.

Pupils have a good knowledge of potential bullying situations. They are very clear that there are few incidents of bullying or poor behaviour, and confident that staff will address any concerns swiftly. This is confirmed by the school's records. Pupils are taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet and know the immediate actions to take if they view anything that causes them concern.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers are creating a culture of success at the school because high expectations are clear for staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are developing a love of learning and want to do their best.
- The governing body is well led. Governors ensure that high-quality learning is at the core of the school's work and are continually striving for the highest standards. They understand the importance of pupils being well prepared academically for the next stage in their education, as well as being confident to take their place in modern Britain.
- Pupils excel in reading. In 2015, more than half of the pupils in Year 6 gained the higher Level 5 in the reading assessment at the end of Key Stage 2. This is well above the national average. Many older pupils are avid readers who read widely and can talk enthusiastically about books they have read.
- The recently appointed English leader is successfully leading on a number of initiatives. He recognises that there is more to do to ensure that the boys achieve as highly as the girls in writing. He has undertaken a careful analysis of pupils' writing and devised a clear action plan. This rightly identifies the need to improve the performance of boys in the national grammar, spelling and punctuation test which was well below the national average in 2015.

- Pupils told me that they enjoy mathematics. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were using their knowledge of angles to calculate the size of a missing angle. Although standards in mathematics were just above average at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, they have dipped from the previous two years. Consequently, you have rightly identified that improving mathematics is a priority for school improvement.
- Many children join the Reception class with limited skills in speech, language, reading and writing. The staff are alert to these needs; they provide appropriate opportunities to introduce children to a wider vocabulary and regularly share stories, poems and rhymes. However, too many children, particularly boys, do not make good progress in writing by the end of the Reception Year. There are not enough opportunities for children to write for different purposes across all areas of learning. In addition, the early years leader recognises that the outdoor area does not fully reflect the indoor area and, as a result, limits children's progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make at least good progress. Pupils who are sight-impaired or blind make outstanding progress throughout their time at the school. This is because of the expert and highly effective care they receive from dedicated support staff, the provision of high-quality resources, and the school's excellent partnership working with parents and external agencies.
- You are introducing new systems for assessing pupils' progress. You and your senior leadership team are passionate about ensuring that pupils, staff and parents develop a good understanding of the school's philosophy of assessment and are using this as a key driver in moving the school forward to be outstanding.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are well developed. This is reflected in their positive attitudes to learning and the respect and care they show to each other. Pupils achieve well in the performing arts, particularly in music, and many pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. You recognise the rich and diverse community in which the school is located, and the potential learning benefits for pupils through developing stronger partnerships with local community groups. Consequently, you have established an arts council and arts committee to drive this forward.

Next steps for the school:

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the progress of boys accelerates in writing so that they attain similar standards to the girls at the end of Key Stage 2
- there are more opportunities for children in the early years to develop their early writing skills, particularly when they are outdoors

- the outdoor area is fully resourced to improve the youngest children's development in all areas of learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, two representatives of the governing body, representatives of the arts council and arts committee, the English subject leader and a group of pupils. We visited several classes together to observe teaching and learning. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break times and during lessons. I met a number of parents informally at the end of the school day and considered the views of 90 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies.